

US Alert 24 Oct 73

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Brezhnev Sought U.S. Aid in Curbing Israel in '73 War,

United Press International

Richard M. Nixon says Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev used the "hot line" to ask U.S. help in curbing Israeli cease-fire violations that might have forced the Russians to intervene in the 1973 Middle East war.

The use of the direct line between Moscow and Washington in October 1973 is disclosed by Nixon in the latest excerpt of his memoirs published today in papers that purchased the syndication rights from a subsidiary of The New York Times.

It is the sixth of seven installments

excerpted from the former president's book, "RN: the Memoirs of Richard Nixon," to be published May 15 by Grosset & Dunlop.

A cease-fire negotiated by then-secretary of state Henry A. Kissinger went into effect on Oct. 22, 1973, but fighting continued. The Israelis and Egyptians accused each other of violations.

"At 11 a.m. on Oct. 23, Brezhnev over the Washington-Moscow hot line charged the Israelis with rupturing the cease-fire," Nixon writes. "He urged that the United States move

decisively to stop the violations. He curtly implied that we might even have colluded in Israel's action.

"I sent a reply that we had insisted that Israel take immediate steps to halt hostilities, and I urged Brezhnev to do the same on the Egyptian side."

The evening of Oct. 24, it became known later, Brezhnev sent a message through the Soviet ambassador in Washington warning that the Soviet Union might intervene unilaterally in the war.

The message said such a move might be taken if the United States

did not stop the Israelis by joining with the Soviet Union in sending military contingents to the Middle East.

In his memoirs, Nixon writes that he regarded the message as "perhaps the most serious threat to the U.S.-Soviet relations since the Cuban missile crisis" of 1962. He said American military forces were put on alert.

Nixon says he sent a letter to Brezhnev, warning the Soviet leader that a unilateral move would produce "incalculable consequences which would end all we have striven so hard to achieve."

Nixon Writes

Nixon praises Kissinger for his "shuttle diplomacy" between the Arabs and Israelis after the war that resulted in the Egyptian-Israeli disengagement accord of January 1974.

Nixon writes that the accord "was a tribute to Kissinger's enormous stamina, his incisive intellect, and not least, his great personal charm."

"It was an even greater tribute because he had to cope with the burden of a president weakened by political attack at home," Nixon says, referring to Watergate.

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D R A F T

THE IMPACT OF THE 24 OCTOBER US ALERT ON THE SOVIET
LEADERSHIP

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- Brezhnev and his colleagues appear to have reacted with far greater concern and annoyance to President Nixon's statements of 26 October focusing public attention on the Soviet threat of unilateral intervention and the US alert than they did to the alert itself. The implication of a Soviet back down almost certainly was the trigger.
- From immediately after the President's press conference of 26 October until just before the 7 November holiday, Soviet official and semi-official statements and media coverage of relations with the US showed measurable, although apparently temporary, strain. Strong public and private official statements denounced the US alert as unjustified by Soviet conduct. Implicit questions were raised about US commitment to existing treaty agreements with the USSR. For the first time, the restrained comment on recent US political scandals gave way in Soviet media to stories linking the erosion of the President's domestic political position and US foreign policy.
- This flurry passed rather quickly, however, and by the 7 November holiday the sharper press and diplomatic signs of strain eased. In fact, they were replaced by an

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official line that detente had lessened, not worsened, the dangers of the Middle East war. Soviet media coverage of US domestic affairs also reverted to the circumspect, with praise for the President and his commitment to detente. At the same time, the Soviets put on the public record enough information on developing complications in US domestic affairs to preserve Soviet options in future press response to any conceivable US political contingency.

--By the latter half of November, Soviet leadership endorsement of the process of making detente irreversible was once again the norm it had been between the April 1973 Party Plenum and the October Middle East war. Brezhnev was properly and typically in the vanguard of those expressing optimism about the prospects for further improvement in relations with the US. Statements on US relations--even by Brezhnev--had a more sober tone, however, ^{than} those made between the Washington Summit and the war. Post-war statements carried a more cautious assessment of the extent of "deepening" achieved to date in detente with the US, and acknowledged that occasional setbacks were to be expected.

--Brezhnev personally was very much involved in wartime decision-making and his prestige was especially on the line

in negotiations with the US for a ceasefire. Thus when that ceasefire failed to take hold, 22-24 October, Brezhnev had a personal political as well as a national policy stake in the outcome of this test of detente. ^{If} Brezhnev was out in front of his colleagues, this was presumably a factor in Soviet reaction to the ceasefire breakdown, the US alert of 24 October, and the President's comments on the events.

--Soviet leadership statements since the alert show something close to the usual variations in individual leaders' support for detente with the US. All who have spoken do, however, appear to be publicly on board on the basics of detente. Brezhnev could reap some later political trouble from the Defcon Three episode, but its seriousness would depend on a confluence of other leadership political and policy strains against which his present degree of power affords strong defenses.